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ABSTRACT

The monograph grew out of the Critical Issues Conference sponsored by the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration (OCLEA). At the one-day conference, 57 researchers and practitioners discussed the ten major areas of research and development needs. These areas, identified in advance of the conference, were leadership and administrator development, the organization, staff development, curriculum/instruction, philosophy/objectives, community education, financing of education, labor relations, evaluation, and sociological and environmental factors. The problems in these areas and the questions asked by the researchers in an attempt to state the research issues growing out of the problems are presented. After the meeting, the attendees were polled to determine the most important issues. The four most important areas were determined to be leadership and administrator development, the organization, evaluation, and curriculum/instruction. (Author/IRT)

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THE NEEDS AHEAD:

Critical Issues Facing Educational Administrators in Ontario

(From the Proceedings of the Conference on Critical Issues Facing Educational Administrators at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, January 10, 1975)

James R. Deneen
Donald F. Musella

EA 007 591

THE ONTARIO COUNCIL FOR LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

To understand the origins of the Critical Issues Conference one must first understand the beginnings and purposes of the Conference sponsor, the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration (OCLEA). The Council was formed out of a concern on the part of several educational associations and institutions for the continuing education of school administrators. Thus, OCLEA's major activity during its 2 year existence has been organizing and conducting inservice workshops for administrators. The success of the workshops and OCLEA's successful experience as a coalition of educational practitioners and researchers led to the formation of a Research and Development Committee, which would encourage field-centred research and development activities. The Committee's paternity suggested that a primary activity should be to bring together those on the educational firing line with those who should provide the ammunition. As the R & D Committee's Chairman, Eric Runacres, stated in his welcoming remarks to the Conference participants,

> "our Committee is not going to *do* research...we should be supportive, acting as brokers in the marketplace of education which has many researchers as well as many practitioners who need help with the difficult problems they face every day. We've tried to create here today a miniature marketplace in which practitioners can lay out their needs and researchers can indicate existing answers or the potential for finding responses to those needs."

That communication problems exist between educational researchers and school administrators has been said often enough to attain high ranking among educational clichés. In looking at Ontario's needs, OCLEA's research committee seemed in a favorable position to deal with the truth in that cliché. The committee includes both practitioners and researchers, and it has research responsibilities for an organization that was itself formed by the cooperative efforts of administrator organizations, colleges and universities and the ministries. The committee chose as its first objective the clarification and reconciliation of the research and development interests of educational researchers and practitioners; it seemed the best procedure to begin would be to sponsor a dialogue of the two groups. So the overall purposes of this Conference were to identify high priority research issues and to help educational practitioners and researchers better understand one another's needs, abilities, and methods of working.

Well in advance of the Conference, each invited participant was asked to submit his/her list of Ontario's most important educational research and development needs. From the lists returned by 31 of the 60 invited participants OCLEA's Director developed 10 categories of issues, each with numerous sub-issues.* When Conference participants arrived, they were assigned to a discussion group titled by one of the major categories of issues. Each group had a chairman and a recorder (the latter were OISE graduate students in educational administration) to summarize the group's major comments and conclusions. After an hour's discussion, participants chose another issues category and regrouped, the only proviso being that each group must include both researchers and practitioners. Recorders remained with their original topic.

The afternoon work session concentrated on a single problem: to identify and recommend "bridges" for the gap between educational research and its application to practice. Again, small groups were formed, each with a recorder.

*For a complete list of issues and sub-issues, see Appendix A, page 19.

In effect, participants had three opportunities to offer their opinion about the Province's educational research and development needs. First, they submitted, prior to the Conference, a list of research and development issues from which the discussions were organized. The second contribution came in the Conference itself when the 57 participants discussed the issues. Two weeks after the Conference, all attendees received a questionnaire asking them, in the light of their discussions and subsequent reflections, to rank in importance the issues and sub-issues of the Conference.

Those who participated in, and those who ultimately will benefit from this Conference are indebted to many persons for its success. Pre-eminently, credit goes to OCLEA's R & D Committee and its energetic Chairman, Eric Runacres. Gratitude is due to OISE for generously providing the physical facilities for the Conference. At OISE, the principal organizer of the many details of the Conference was June Armstrong; thanks to her experience and foresight the logistics of the meeting went well. The editors want to acknowledge with particular gratitude the help of Bob Ferguson whose skilled hand was in evidence from the training session for the recorders to the tallying of questionnaires. Finally, great credit is due to the OISE graduate students who generously donated their time and skills to record the Conference proceedings.

II. FRAMEWORK OF THE CONFERENCE

A. The Issues

The issues identified in advance of the Conference are listed in Appendix A. It is enough to indicate here that these issues fell into ten categories and these categories – with one exception – formed the bases of the Conference's deliberations. The categories were:

1. Leadership and Administrator Development
2. The Organization
3. Staff Development
4. Curriculum/Instruction
5. Philosophy/Objectives
6. Community Education
7. Financing of Education
8. Labour Relations
9. Evaluation
X. Sociological and Environmental Factors

Category X was not so much unknown as undefinable; it included some serious issues which did not appear to cluster together or with other categories. Because of the heterogeneous character of the topic, no group was assigned to discuss category X; it did appear with its sub-issues in the questionnaire for considerations of ranking.

The researchers were given a certain lead-off advantage by Barr Greenfield, Professor of Educational Administration, OISE. As usual, practitioners, had the last word, with Stan Berry, Director of the Carleton School System and President of OCLEA's Board, concluding the day's activities. Dr. Greenfield's candid observations on the relationship of research to the real world of schools follow.

B. Remarks by T. Barr Greenfield

I am going to start with a little diagram that will probably be very familiar to many of you, a so-called research and development model for education – one that researchers were very fond of, when this institute was created in 1965. In fact, I have stood before groups like this and told them that this is the way R and D works. I had a series of boxes, linked by arrows. (Researchers

simply can't discuss plans or activities unless they are linked by arrows; this is called theoretical thinking.) The first box is "basic research" the unadulterated investigation of truth which normally occurs in a university or a laboratory far away from where anything practical is going on. After truth is discovered, it can then be made ready for practice. Enter the developers – they are also scientists – who place the new-found truth in another box. It can now be tried in the field to find out whether or not it works. If we find that the package works, the next box is labelled "implementation", and wisdom has arrived at the school room door.

What sometimes happened when this model was unveiled was that some of the blunter teachers and administrators among you used to stand up and say "where is the arrow going the other way? Are schools and colleges the end or the starting point of research?" Today, I believe most researchers agree that if there are solutions to educational problems they probably will not be discovered solely or even largely by investigation which goes on separated from the reality of students, teachers and all who are involved in formal education.

There is also a negative and unrealistic view that some practitioners have of educational research and its potential for helping with educational problems. In an oversimplified fashion that view can be characterized by "who needs research? I must know how to deal with my problems or I would not be here. There you are in your ivory tower; virtually everything worthwhile that you know I've learned from practice and can apply in a more useful way".

The result of such a posture was that a relationship developed which made it difficult to conduct practical, field-centered research. I have noticed time and time again that when researchers become involved in schools, they are invited to look at the easy, or less important, or less threatening problems. After the researcher labours and comes up with his recommendations, the practitioner says, "yes, but that doesn't apply to the big picture". But results that apply to the big picture can only be obtained if the researcher has been allowed to look at the big problems. That's at least one reason for having this Conference today.

We hope that this is the kind of Conference that will allow us, researchers and practitioners, to talk directly, sincerely and honestly with each other about the real problems in the world of education, and how we can build a new relationship that allows and encourages researchers to help resolve those problems.

III. DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES

Each small group discussed a category of issues during the first morning session; for the second session, participants chose a different discussion topic. Since the recorders remained with the same topic for both sessions their notes combine the consideration of a topic by two different groups.

The recorders summarized the discussions in terms of *problems* and *questions*. A problem statement represents primarily the practitioner's viewpoint; it is an issue with which he must deal in performing his duties. A question represents an attempt to state research issues which are suggested by a practitioner's problem.

A. Research Categories

1. Leadership and Administrator Development

Problem 1: What is the nature of the educational leader's role today?

Questions:
a. How do incumbents in leadership roles today perform? What do they do? What are they supposed to do?
b. How will the leader's role at various levels change in the next few years? (*Note*: The chief executive officer's and the principal's roles were selected as the first ones to be studied.)

Problem 2: What leadership qualities and behaviours will be most needed in educational administration during the next two decades?

Questions:
a. What will be the educational climate?
b. What competencies will this climate require?
c. Which among the needed competencies are learnable behaviours?
d. What training programs will best teach these competencies?
e. Among the learnable behaviours which are most easily and efficiently taught? By whom?

Problem 3: There is a great need to identify potential leadership within a school system.

Questions:
a. What are valid predictors of leadership ability?
b. How can these criteria be measured?

Problem 4: The introduction of term appointments increases the need for defensible and useful evaluation of administrators.

Questions:
a. What are the critical administrative behaviours that should be evaluated?
b. How can the validity and reliability of criterion measures be enhanced and/or better measures devised?
c. Do term appointments for administrators result in more effective leadership?
d. What problems may be created by the introduction of term contracts?

Problem 5: There is a need to study the changing role of the elected representative as it relates to the school system.

Questions:
a. What changes have occurred in the trustees' role since the introduction of larger jurisdictions?
b. Is the present method of electing trustees the best method?
c. It appears that the introduction of term contracts for senior administrators will increase the leadership role of trustees. What is the best way to prepare

them for this role?

Problem 6: There is a need to determine and assess community values and needs.

Questions: a. How can one identify community values?

b. How can an administrator-leader meet community expectations and still give direction toward other values and needs?

2. *The Organization*

Problem 1: How can educational organizations be evaluated?

Questions: a. What are appropriate criteria? Who decides them? How?

b. How can the different goals held for the organization by its various members be reconciled?

Problem 2: How do individuals respond to organizational needs?

Questions: a. What is required to maximize individual contributions within an organization?

b. What kinds of capabilities does an educational organization most need?

c. What kinds of needs do people in an organization have and how can these needs best be met?

Problem 3: Developing constructive relationships within an organization.

Questions: a. To what extent does the size of an organization affect the feelings of personal satisfaction of those working within it?

b. What organization structures are most conducive to a feeling of satisfaction on the part of participants?

c. Can feelings of security (insecurity) among members of an organization be measured?

d. What conditions are most conducive to trusting relationships within an organization?

e. How can these conditions be introduced and maintained?

f. To what extent are productive relationships within an organization blocked by a lack of human relations skills?

g. How can inhibitions to communication be reduced in the superordinate-colleague-subordinate network?

h. What skills and techniques are needed to reconcile differences of opinion in reaching organizational decisions?

Problem 4: Accommodating diversity in an organization.

Questions: a. What kind of organization can best accommodate a diversity of client expectations?

b. To what extent are schools unicultural organizations?

c. If schools are unicultural, what are the implications of this for a multicultural society?

d. How can a need for common educational experiences be integrated with demands for cultural diversity?

e. What cultural pressures operate on educational organizations? What processes may be used for determining priorities?

Problem 5: Problem-solving as affected by value systems.

Questions:
a. How can we identify effective problem-solving techniques for people with different expectations and value systems?
b. What are appropriate techniques for resolving conflict among people with similar value systems as compared to those with different value systems?
c. What alternative procedures are available for moving from a hierarchical to a more horizontal organizational structure?
d. How can an organization's capacity to define and solve problems effectively be measured?
e. How can an educational organization best develop a repertoire of problem-solving skills among its members?

3. *Staff Development*

Problem 1: How are objectives for staff development identified?

Questions:
a. How are the goals for individuals, the system, and sub-system units (college, school, department) identified?
b. How does an organization identify and train the various desired and appropriate constituent representatives for the objective development and implementation stages of the process?

Problem 2: Lack of appropriate re-training programs.

Questions:
a. What are the high priority needs of the school/college systems in the immediate and long range future?
b. What should constitute the key elements of a continuous retraining program at the individual, system, and sub-system levels?
c. How does an organization identify the human and material resources needed for an on-going re-training program?
d. What alternative models of staff development have been most successful?

Problem 3: Lack of continual professional development programs related to curriculum development and renewal.

Questions:
a. How does an organization develop an on-going mechanism for staffing present and future curricular programs?
b. How can we identify areas of the curriculum that need to be changed?
c. How do curriculum changes affect the roles of personnel in the system or sub-systems?

Problem 4: How should the staff development program be evaluated?

Questions:
a. What purpose should the evaluation serve?
b. Who should evaluate?
c. What criteria for evaluation should be used?
d. What instruments can be used or should be designed to measure performance?

4. *Curriculum/Instruction*

Problem 1: Who should be responsible for curriculum development?

Questions:
a. Ideally, what are the tasks and roles involved in curriculum development?
b. In reality, what tasks and roles are involved in curriculum development?
c. What are the discrepancies between the ideal and the real? Why do these discrepancies exist? What can we do to reduce them?

Note: This research should be conducted on both a case study and a survey basis. Case studies should look at many different contexts of curriculum development, including different subject areas and levels of complexity ranging from curriculum development in the individual school or college to that for an entire system. The survey approach should gather data on a provincial basis.

Problem 2: What are some administrative implications of curriculum development?

Questions:
a. How is curriculum development affected by social changes and pressure groups?
b. What is the most effective way to prepare staff for curriculum change?
c. What organizational arrangements are best for curriculum development? Should it be done on an individual unit, system, or area basis?
d. What are the most effective ways to get commitment from the people involved?

Problem 3: What values and attitudes determine curriculum?

Questions:
a. What is the opinion of various groups (Ministry, board officials, elected trustees, teachers, etc.) regarding what should be happening in curriculum development?
b. What are the discrepancies in opinion among these groups?
c. How can administrators deal with these discrepancies?

Problem 4: Of what importance is the teaching of basic skills?

Questions:
a. What skills are essential?
b. What levels of these skills are essential for whom?

Problem 5: What is the relative effectiveness of various teaching/learning strategies?

Question: Which strategies are appropriate for attaining which objectives?

Problem 6: What are the differences between objectives set at the provincial and local levels?

Question: How can these differences be reconciled?

Problem 7: How can differences in teaching and learning styles be identified?

Question: Can teaching materials and techniques be adapted to these different styles?

5. *Philosophy and Objectives*

Problem 1: Participative decision-making seems to increase the difficulty in determining philosophy and objectives and in identifying those who should make the final decision.

Questions:
a. How are educational philosophies now being translated into objectives? By whom?
b. What are the constraints on the search for educational objectives?

Problem 2: Administrators have generally been trained to function in closed systems; today they must cope with many conflicting philosophies and various constituencies' objectives.

Questions:
a. How can administrators and teachers be trained to search out and appreciate varying, sometimes contradictory, objectives?
b. How can teachers and administrators develop a coherent set of personal norms and objectives which will accommodate their board's philosophy,

varying teacher styles and the many different needs of students?

Problem 3: A variety of philosophies and objectives can be found within each school and among schools. "Success" seems equally distributed between the philosophically consistent and the philosophically diverse.

Questions:
a. Among schools with consistent philosophies, which are "successful"? Why?
b. Among schools which are philosophically diverse, which are "successful"? Why?
c. What are the philosophical correlates of a successful school? Are there limits to inter-school diversity beyond which a school system will break down?
d. How can the extent to which an educational philosophy has been operationalized best be assessed?

Problem 4: Teachers can become frustrated as a consequence of setting or having set for them unrealistic objectives, then failing to meet the objectives.

Question: How can people be helped to recognize the realities of their situations and the constraints upon them, then to set and accept realistic objectives?

6. *Community Education*

Problem 1: There is need for a new model of community education which integrates that function into the total community's services.

Questions:
a. How does the present situation of shared (or competing) responsibilities induce inefficiencies?
b. What are some models of cooperation among community educational agencies in terms of physical facilities, scheduling and control?
c. How can the problems of overlapping and competing jurisdictions be resolved?
d. What legislative changes would be required to resolve the jurisdictional problem? How could these changes be effected?
e. Is some competition and overlap desirable among community education agencies?

Problem 2: The nature of community education

Questions:
a. Does the term imply education *for* the community, education *by* the community, or both?
b. To what extent should the schools and colleges give credence to groups which (purport to) represent the community?
c. How can more "laymen" be involved in education, not only as students, but as teachers, consultants, etc.
d. What are the obstacles to greater community use of the schools' and colleges' facilities?
e. Should students and teachers spend more time in learning outside the school, using community resources as the learning media? If so, how can such learning experiences be evaluated?

7. *Finance*

Problem 1: Major changes in public opinion are creating new attitudes towards, and

expectations of education. Yet innovation generally costs more, at least at the beginning or experimental states.

Questions: a. How can new educational programs be financed?

b. What alternate methods of educational finance, particularly in respect to the control aspect of spending ceilings, are available? What alternate equalization formulas by weighting factors are available?

c. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives?

Problem 2: Many institutions are being asked to serve wider segments of the population at a time resources are either shrinking or not expanding proportionately with the demand.

Questions: Are there ways for serving more people without increasing financial resources? What is the cost efficiency of present and alternative methods of delivering educational services?

Problem 3: Institutions must do long range planning, yet governmental fiscal policy and grants are on a year to year basis.

Questions: a. How can coordinated long range planning between provincial and local levels be encouraged and developed?

b. Can the setting and development of objectives be better integrated through the sharing of information?

c. Can common criteria be developed for setting priorities?

d. Can common (provincial and local) planning models for financing be developed?

Problem 4: There is a need for inter-institutional and inter-agency cooperation at the local and provincial level to ensure efficient use of all resources.

Questions: a. What program and facility overlap exists among various institutions?

b. What are the obstacles to sharing and collaboration among agencies?

c. What services performed by educational institutions could be carried out by other agencies?

d. Can policies, procedures and grant systems be developed to encourage cooperation and maximize use of resources?

e. What financial mechanisms or negative penalties can be developed to encourage institutions to share under-utilized facilities?

Problem 5: The present division of fiscal responsibility and control between the local and provincial levels requires review.

Questions: a. What fiscal areas do local institutions presently control and have responsibility for?

b. What changes in control and responsibility should be made to ensure more effective fiscal control and accountability?

Problem 6: Government policies, goals and priorities are not entirely consistent with the structure and mechanisms for financing education.

Questions: a. What are the discrepancies and contradictions between educational policies and grants and financial mechanisms? Such a study would consider: (i) problems created by funding through local property taxes, (ii) the reasons for and the advantages of this type of funding, and (iii) a re-assessment of the

present practice of using property taxes for educational financing.

b. Are the objectives of efficient financing and the best use of resources consistent with provincial or system-wide regulations about school days, the school year and credit systems?

Problem 7: If a school devises a method of graduating students from secondary school in a shorter time by offering more intensive programs, the school would be penalized financially since staff costs probably would remain stable or increase while reimbursement would be less.

Question: Can alternate financing at the secondary level be devised that would be based on credits or academic levels achieved rather than on the amount of time students spend in school?

Problem 8: In a declining enrolment situation serious problems may be caused by linking financing mechanisms to pupil enrolment.

Questions: a. What are the problems caused by linking finance to enrolment?

b. What are some new criteria and strategies for closing schools and for changing school boundaries? These might include:(i) more effective political strategies based on successful experience, and (ii) more data on which to base such decisions (the optimum size of elementary and secondary schools, the effects of busing, etc.)

Problem 9: We need to examine the impact on educational costs of changes in compulsory education and of alternative forms of education.

Questions: a. What are the cost benefits of private schooling, private contracts, voucher systems, and "taxation for education" rebates?

8. *Labour Relations*

Problem 1: Recent outcomes of collective bargaining seem to give teachers a larger share in educational policy decisions, but there has been no change in mechanisms for locating accountability.

Questions: a. How do the outcomes of collective bargaining affect the political accountability of trustees?

b. To what extent should teachers share accountability for educational outcomes?

Problem 2: Negotiations often seem to have a negative impact on staff morale in school systems.

Questions: a. What is the relationship between various aspects (length, form, etc.) of negotiations and the morale and turnover of trustees, teachers, administrators, and students?

b. What is the effect of teacher militancy on student expectations of power?

Problem 3: What are the causes of teacher militancy?

Question: To what degree do each of the following encourage teacher militancy: (i) actual working conditions including salaries, (ii) the desire to control access to and membership in the profession, and (iii) the administrative processes of the Board?

Problem 4: Where does the public stand on various negotiation practices?

Questions: a. What effect do the various sanctions employed by teachers have on public attitudes toward teachers, trustees, administrators and the Ministry of Education?

b. Do these attitudes vary depending on whether the negotiations involve elementary o secondary schools, public or separate schools, colleges or universities?

9. *Evaluation*

Problem 1: Teachers and administrators are generally reluctant to be evaluated.

Questions: a. Do persons working in authoritarian systems show different reactions to evaluation from persons in more democratic environments?

b. Does willingness to be evaluated increase as evaluation criteria are made more specific?

c. Does improving the validity and reliability of evaluation measures reduce opposition to evaluation?

d. Does clarification of role requirements promote positive attitudes towards evaluation?

e. Are educators more accepting of evaluation which seeks to improve their performance, rather than that which leads to judgments for administrative purposes?

f. What evaluation agents are most acceptable to staff? Which seem to result in desirable behaviour changes: (i) evaluation by superordinates, (ii) evaluation by clients (students, parents), (iii) evaluation by subordinates, and (iv) self-evaluation?

B. Researcher – Practitioner Linkage

A single topic formed the basis of the Conference's afternoon discussions: *how to reduce the gap between the tasks of planning and conducting research and the application of research findings to the problems of educational practitioners.*

Every group mentioned the need for improved researcher-practitioner communication. That communication should start with "get-acquainted" sessions like the present Conference, which would build understanding and trust. As specific research undertakings begin to take shape, communication and cooperation should begin at the stage of problem definition. The involvement of practitioners at initial stages of research planning will do much to ensure that research outcomes are applicable – and will, in fact, be applied to local needs. An issue allied to that of communication, namely the role of OISE and Ministry field centres, arose in several groups. Some participants viewed the primary purpose of the Centres as dissemination agencies while others saw them as the focal point for local research. A number of participants suggested that coordination and dissemination of research efforts would be substantially aided by a province-wide data bank of educational research.

Some practitioners raised the issue of sharing responsibility, not only for planning, but also for the risks that attend research projects. When a school research effort "fails", the administrators who supported the project must often bear the burden of staff, board, and parental disappointment. Even before the results are reported, research at the elementary/secondary level can generate local storm centres; again it is the administrator rather than the researcher who must answer to a disturbed constituency. Even when research is perceived as successful, there is often lacking a cooperatively developed plan for follow-through. Research results frequently do not become institutionalized and the local school or system realizes no enduring gain.

Several participants referred to Dr. Greenfield's remarks about administrators' apparent reluctance to encourage or even permit researchers to work on the most significant problems. This reluctance seems to come from a (sometimes accurate) perception of research as impractical and remote from real life situations. One suggestion for reducing this impasse was the presence on every board and college staff of at least one professional person who would act as liaison between researchers and administrators. This staff member would be involved in the planning and design of local studies, and would insist that proposed research include plans for local benefits; this person would also facilitate understanding and implementation by practitioners of research results.

As more boards and colleges encourage needs analysis, the results should form the agenda for research. The outcomes of staff development programs – which, presumably, are based on local staff needs – should be evaluated by researchers and the most effective conditions for staff learning should be identified. A province-wide survey of administrator preparation and inservice training would help in identifying good programs, reducing redundant planning and training efforts, and indicating where inservice needs are greatest.

Research which is successful may induce changes within schools or colleges; this can pose a substantial threat to people in those institutions. Sometimes the persons whose roles would be changed by research findings are asked to aid the investigation. To expect whole-hearted co-operation with such "problem-causing research" is naive. Frequently, however, these fears are unfounded. Researchers and practitioners together should review proposed studies for potential negative impact on local staff; whenever possible, the proposal should be so written and the staff informed that no participant will be penalized by the outcomes of the study.

Several groups expressed their approval of the Conference's effort to narrow the practitioner – researcher gap by bringing representatives together. The participants urged OCLEA to undertake further activities which would help researchers and practitioners know one another better and understand the skills that each can contribute to solving educational problems.

IV. RANKING OF MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

A. Ranking Process

Some 2 weeks after the Conference, all participants received questionnaires asking them to rank the "most important" and "second most important" among the 10 categories of issues. Participants also indicated their opinions on the two most important sub-issues within their selected categories. For scoring purposes, each first choice category and its sub-issues received a weighting of 2 and each second choice category and sub-issues were given a single tally.

Responses were categorized whenever possible as coming from "research-oriented" or "practice-oriented" participants (hereafter, researchers or practitioners). Respondents from university environments and officials whose major tasks appeared to center on research were labelled researchers. Those working in school or college administration or teaching, association officials, and most Ministry participants were considered practitioners. A few respondents could not be so simply catalogued and are labelled "others".

Before reviewing the results of the ranking questionnaires, the editors wish to enter a few cautions and concerns. The intent of the Conference was to indicate issues which urgently require further research and to initiate better communication between researchers and practitioners, not to identify with certainty for all time, or even for now *the* issues on which research should be conducted. The process of forced choice from a restricted list of options doesn't encourage closure on the research options chosen. Rather, these issues and sub-issues should be seen as promising subjects for further dialogue, clarification and, perhaps, investigation.

The Conference sponsors took care to invite a sampling of practitioners and researchers, but no group of 57 people can presume to speak for the entire Province. Again, the sponsors hope that this Conference will make it easier to initiate researcher-practitioner discussions on a larger scale.

The Conference addressed critical issues facing educational administration. Important as they are, administrators must balance their interests and needs with those of teachers, parents, *et al*.

A question raised about the Conference's priorities is whether these would be substantially altered if all participants had available a summary of existing research in each category. Studies of leadership behaviour, for example, are legion in educational administration, business and industry, the military, and elsewhere.

A gratifying total of 50 questionnaires was received from the 57 Conference participants. Three returns were unusable, so 47 of the attendants are represented in the ranking of issues and sub-issues. From this group 22 (47%) were designated researchers, 18 (39%) practitioners, and 7 (14%) as others. The total number of "points" – weighted votes – to be distributed in the rankings was 141: two for each first choice, one for each second choice of 47 respondents. To guide them in arriving at their weightings, participants were told:

> By "most important" we mean the issues and sub-issues which, given research and translation of research results into practice, would have the maximum helpful impact on educational administration. Constraints to bear in mind are that research on the issue (sub-issue) would show some promise of payoff in educational practice within 3-5 years, and would not entail unrealistic outlay of resources, considering current funding sources and budgets. In other words, where would you begin?

B. The Most Important Issues

Under the adopted weighting system the category titled *Leadership and Administrator Development* was perceived to be the most important. It received 29 points, 10 more than the next most popular category. The topic received somewhat more favorable notice from researchers than practitioners with 13 researchers and 8 practitioners indicating they considered this category to be of great importance. Seven respondents who selected this issue could not be labelled as researchers or practitioners.

Within the category, 3 of the 12 sub-issues accounted for 70% of the choices. These three sub-issues, in order of perceived importance, are:

(1) The refinement of specific skills in such areas as planning/programming, budgeting, evaluation, management by objectives, conflict management, negotiations and human relations; techniques for generating, analyzing and operationalizing alternative futures for education in given jurisdictions.

(2) The identification of valid predictors of leadership capabilities among educators, including the extent to which teaching effectiveness is related to leadership capability.

(3) The establishment of criteria by which educational administration can be evaluated, including methods for reviewing, analyzing, and assessing performance against the criteria.

A division of opinion between researchers and practitioners was perceptible on one sub-issue: ten researchers considered sub-issue 3 (Establishment of criteria for evaluating educational administrators . . .) as one of the two most important. No practitioner selected this sub-issue.

The second most popular category of issues was *The Organization*. This topic accumulated 19 points, with 11 weighted votes from researchers and 7 from practitioners.

Selections of sub-issues showed a fairly even dispersal for the second category. The three most popular were:

(a) How can we arrange for "due process", given the climate of full participation by interested groups?

(b) (tied with c) How to provide direction, autonomy, support and monitoring to effect maximum quality and commitment.

(c) The need to improve our methods by utilizing available human and material resources; the coordination of research activities.

Researchers and practitioners were equally interested in the first sub-issue above. The next two sub-issues split respondents with 6 practitioner votes and none from researchers for sub-issue (b) (How to provide directions, support . . .). Conversely, 6 researchers chose sub-issue (c) (The need to improve our methods . . .), while no practitioners voted for that topic.

Tied for the third most frequently cited category were *Evaluation* and *Curriculum/Instruction.* Sixteen votes were tallied for each issue. Researchers and practitioners appeared equally concerned about *Evaluation*; no single sub-issue clearly dominated the choices, but "evaluation as input for decision-making" was a slight favorite. Five researchers, one administrator and two "unknowns" labelled this the most important sub-issue.

The topic, *Curriculum/Instruction* was selected disproportionately by researchers over practitioners. Ten of the former and three of the latter (plus three "unknowns") formed this category. Among the sub-issues two garnered almost all the interest.

(1) The problem of preparing staff for new directions in curriculum and evaluation; the establishment of a research and development base for these new programs.

(2) The need for suitable organizations for translating Ministry policy into classroom practice in the light of local needs, and for assessing the effects in achieving the system's goals.

These four major categories, *Leadership and Administrator Development, the Organization, Evaluation,* and *Curriculum/Instruction* accounted for 60% of the total voting points. The remaining 40% was spread quite evenly across the other 6 topics.

V. MAJOR QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchable questions identified by the Conferees as "most important" constitute a set of recommendations for the consideration of researchers and funding agencies. Those questions and the participants' suggestions for closing the practitioner-researcher gap are summarized in the following paragraphs.

The category of research issues which Conferees considered most important is that of *Leadership and Administrator Development*. Within that category, participants gave priority to developing administrators' skills to deal with an array of critical tasks, identifying predictors of leadership capability and establishing valid criteria for evaluating administrators.

In their discussion of the *Leadership* category, participants suggested that the studies mentioned above should be preceded by analysis of current administrative behaviour, and predictions about the future organizational climate in which administrators will operate, while emphasizing the importance in school systems of the chief executive and principal's roles, they also urged a study of the role of the trustee.

In ranking the *Leadership* sub-issues, no practitioner (as opposed to 10 researchers) favoured the development of evaluative criteria for administrators. A general distaste for being evaluated is the most obvious explanation for the disparity of views, but the technical weaknesses of present measures and other less personal reasons may partly account for the responses. Certainly, any researcher interested in studies which include the evaluation of administrators would be wise to probe carefully the attitudes of his subject population before planning and designing his study.

In the second most popular category, *The Organization*, practitioners expressed more concern about the techniques needed to improve quality and commitments within the organization; researchers emphasized better use of existing resources and the coordination of research activities. Both groups saw a need for research on the organizational impact of greater participation in decision-making by all parties of interest. The discussion sessions emphasized the need for better criteria and processes to evaluate the organization's effectiveness, and to understand relationships within the organization.

Two of the 10 categories tied for third place in the participant's rankings. The issue of *Evaluation* included concerns for making personnel and program assessment more palatable and helpful to staff and the organization itself. *Curriculum/Instruction* was of particular interest to researchers. Problems of preparing staff for curricular innovations, of relating local goals to provincial policy, and of assessing the effects of instruction were most frequently mentioned.

In discussing most of the categories, participants mentioned the importance of developing evaluative criteria and procedures. Since there was also a specific category labelled "*Evaluation*" and it received considerable attention, it seems fair to conclude that personnel and curricular evaluation is perceived as a subject of great importance by the Conferees.

The general theme that ran through the discussion about the gap between researchers and practitioners was the need for greatly improved communication. Researchers were asked to translate their findings into brief, comprehensible statements indicating both the limitations and the generalizability of their findings. Practitioners were requested to indicate areas of school and college life which involved truly significant research issues. In a broader sense, the need for communication was seen in the urging of joint responsibilities on every stage of research, especially those of initial planning and evaluating/reporting. The designation of professionals within school systems and colleges as liaison people for research was also seen as aiding communication for

planning and dissemination. A province-wide survey of existing administrator training was recommended as a specific research effort with high value for educational research and practice. Finally, the Conferees urged replications of the present day's effort to bring researchers and practitioners into direct personal contact.

VI. APPENDICES

A. Critical Issues Facing Educational Administrators (Appendix A)

1. Leadership and Administrator Development

The identification of valid predictors of leadership capabilities among educators, including the extent to which teaching effectiveness is related to leadership capability; analysis of leadership needs of Ontario in next decade; determination of selection criteria, training programs; evaluation procedures; defining the educational administrator; identifying an educational leader; coping with various role expectations; making use of expertise within the organization; need for new sets of skills for administrators; the establishment of criteria by which educational administrators can be evaluated, including the development of methods for reviewing, analyzing, and assessing performance against the criteria; the evaluation of the effectiveness of the professional preparation programs; the refinement of specific skills in such areas as planning – programming – budgeting – evaluation systems, management-by-objectives, conflict management, negotiations, human relations, and techniques for generating, analyzing, and operationalizing alternative futures for education in given jurisdictions.

2. The Organization

The identification of redundant staff, including recommendations for solutions in terms of declining school enrolment and financial constraints; the generation of staff creativity in program development, including attention to loosening up a bureaucratic organization to insure flow of ideas; mechanisms for identifying human, informational and professional development resources; how can we manage to arrange for "due process" given the climate of full participation by interested groups. how to change educational practice; how to know the right course of action; how to provide direction, autonomy, support and monitoring to effect maximum quality and commitment; how to resolve the problem of communication between and among peers, subordinates, and superordinates within the organization; role definition and clarification at all levels; re-thinking of traditional organization in light of cultural factors; need for alternative positions for leaders to seek satisfaction; determining areas of responsibility leading to improved staff-board relations; the need to improve our methods of utilizing available human and material resources; the coordination of research activities.

3. Staff Development

Establishing the growth needs of all staff; determining the appropriate professional development program; establishing the appropriate jurisdictions needed to coordinate the programs; matching funds with jurisdictional responsibilities; coping with job dissatisfaction; finding ways to help people gain career satisfaction; development of new approaches to staff motivation at a time when traditional opportunities for advancement are declining and numerous forces are contributing to staff insecurity; how to maintain high morale in the face of difficulties with budgets and physical plant restrictions; retraining of teachers to permit them to teach different disciplines; trustee dissatisfaction and apathy.

4. Curriculum/Instruction

Need for clarification of who develops curriculum; problem of preparing staff for new directions in

curriculum and instruction and establishing a research and development base for these new programs; special programs for exceptional children; evaluation of French in the elementary schools, need to re-assess the learning environment of students; need for suitable organizations for translating Ministry policy into classroom practice in light of local needs and for assessing the effects in achieving the system's goals; division of resources between programs for normal and exceptional children; review of vocational training in the secondary schools; question of standards for student outcomes; need for more effective/efficient institutional methods.

5. Philosophy/Objectives

Need to re-examine philosophy of education in light of attitude and demands of public(s); need for new, more realistic objectives; conflict accommodation needed between rising expectations from schooling and increased dissatisfaction in terms of parental needs and desires; need for short and long-term planning and research in bridging the philosophy/objectives with the fiscal and operational means; establishing objectives and learning outcomes for entire curriculum which meets needs of the future; resolving the apparent polarization in philosophies; career-oriented vs. non-career-oriented education at the college level.

6. Community Education

Need for alternatives available for viable school-community interrelationships; community use of schools; alternatives to present areas of responsibility among educational, municipal, provincial, college and other jurisdictions; identification of the individual parts of the total educational community; clear delineation of the role of each; elimination of duplication of programmes and competition for students; shared use of facilities; the determination of community aspirations for educational institutions, including ways of involving community in planning, programming, and evaluation; stimulating and accommodating the increased participation of adults as students; educating parents and providing them with resources so that they can better supplement the efforts of the school in the education of their children; the extension of educational opportunities to pre-school and post-school age groups; integration of physical resources between schools, community colleges and universities.

7. Financing of Education

Fiscal uncertainty; effects on innovative programs; effects on personnel morale; contradictions to philosophy advocated by the Ministry; lack of acceptable priorities; lack of clarity in areas of responsibility; need for alternatives to present federal/provincial/local fiscal sharing; protecting from the impact of inflation; effects of the accessibility policy on financial restraints at the college level.

8. Labour Relations

Staff militancy; negotiations, individual contracts vs. collective agreements; principal's role dilemma; staff demands for decision-making without direct accountability; effect of collective bargaining on quality of education; unions and political involvement; the professional vs. union positions; effect of unionization of college and university faculty on the educational institution.

9. Evaluation

Effects of open plan schools on learning and teaching; evaluation of the system – personnel, programs, students; evaluation as input for decision-making; evaluation as input for changing educational practice; evaluation as a response to accountability demands at all levels and on all aspects of the organization; approaches to the evaluation of programs and the reporting of program progress to the community – students, parents, staff, ministries, lay groups, politicians.

10. Sociological and Environmental Factors

Availability of qualified staff; clarification of ministries' areas of responsibility; impact of regional government; declining enrolments; decline in ethical and moral standards; relationship between nutrition and the learning process; balance between central and decentralized control and autonomy; population crisis; world food crisis; ecological problems; native peoples; biculturalism; two school systems; effects of immigration; citizen militancy.

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